

Note from the District Manager

I do my best to keep these sections apolitical and, fear not, I will continue to do so going forward! But this quarter I am going to start with politics. In Vermont, a State still marked by agriculture, our Legislators arrive in Montpelier each year only once the harvest is gathered and winter has well and truly set in. Only now is the time when our legislative session begins to gather steam. The Districts are units of government, similar to municipalities, and organized under a State Agency (State Natural Resources Conservation Council). And as units of government, each year the Districts make a request for core funding from the State. Despite having much support among Legislators, we expect that this coming year will be a challenging year for District funding.

While we will make a request of the Vermont Legislature, we will also go about our typical work of writing the grants that allow us to continue our work, even in difficult funding environments. Since June, we have written nearly 20 grants, representing millions of dollars in funding. These grants cover District programming from agricultural improvements for the farms we work with, to the construction of river and lake accesses, to the removal of dams, to education programs. The awards for some of these grants are still pending, but I am very happy to report that we have received awards from a half-dozen of the applications to date, worth just over half of a million dollars! And this winter there will be more grant writing to come! I have four sitting on my desk right now. These grants allow us not only to pay our staff but also to complete sometimes large and expensive infrastructure projects. (Cont. Pg 2)

Dan Koenemann presents the mission and accomplishments of the Winooski NRCDC at the annual dinner, held at North Branch Nature Center in Montpelier, Vermont. (Credit: Winooski NRCDC)



Areas that we consistently struggle to find funding sources to support, however, are project scoping and development, and institutional management. The modest funding that we receive from the State each year, along with revenues from our annual tree sale, provide some of this funding. Funding in these areas allows us to visit potential project sites, speak with landowners and stakeholders, and do research, all before there is ever really a "project" to speak of. Funding in these areas also allows us to contribute to emerging initiatives that we have not yet secured funding to support (various town flood resiliency collaboratives, for example) and build them into something that can be funded. As December quickly comes to a close, I ask that you consider the Winooski NRCD in your end-of-year giving plans to help support these activities. Donations can be made right on our website. If you are unable to donate, there are other ways to support the District, including volunteer opportunities coming this spring (a farm clean up and multiple tree plantings).

Finally, I want to thank all those who attended our annual dinner on November 12. It was a joyful evening at an excellent location (North Branch Nature Center, Montpelier). If you are celebrating any of the coming Holidays, I hope they are equally joyful. Thank you for your support over the past year and we look forward to your support in the coming year!

Agriculture Updates - Locally Led Conservation

The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District is inviting you to participate in our 2026 Locally Led Conservation Process. Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts were established through Vermont's Soil Conservation Act (1939) to assist landowners with voluntary conservation of the natural resources they steward. Each year the Conservation Districts collaborate with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify local natural resource conservation priorities to help direct Federal spending. This locally led conservation process includes both a survey (information attached, and linked [here](#)) and in-person forums.

This year our two in-person forums are January 12th from 10:00AM - Noon at the Richmond Town Clerk Office (203 Bridge St, Richmond, VT 05477) and January 14 from 10 AM to Noon at the Marshfield Town Clerk Office (122 School St #1, Marshfield, VT 05658)

We would very much like your input as part of this process. Please complete the survey. Thank you and we look forward to your feedback!

Agriculture Updates - Nutrient Management Plan Class

The WNRCD has two Agricultural Staff that can help you complete your Nutrient Management Plans!

UVM is hosting a virtual NMP development course. These classes will run for 6 consecutive weeks starting in mid-January 2026. Class hours are generally from 10:30am to 2:00pm and include lecture and NMP work time where you can get 1 on 1 time with our agricultural specialists. Classes in 2026 are January 15, 22, 29, as well as February 5, 12, and 26. There is No Class February 19. If you desire an in-person opportunity to attend this NMP course, the Winooski NRC D kindly invites you to our office to participate in the program. Please reach out to our agricultural specialists via email to seize this opportunity.

Key requirements for enrolling in the class are a current Land Treatment Plan (LTP) plus up to date soil/manure test results. If you find that you need assistance acquiring an LTP our staff will be ready to help develop this document with you in the spring of 2026. Also, soil sampling is always a service the Winooski NRC D offers, please do not hesitate to reach out via email to our ag specialists for this service.

Please reach out to kara@winooskinrcd.org or Heather@winooskinrcd.org if you are interested in taking this class or if you need general assistance writing your NMP.



Cows on a farm during an agricultural technical assistance site visit (Credit: Winooski NRC D)

Conservation Updates - Watershed Protection Projects

On the watershed projects side of things, we've been quite busy heading into the winter! Lucas, our conservation specialist and Stream Team coordinator, teamed up with the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains for a stream clean-up along Indian Brook near Essex High School. The scouts learned about stormwater management, pollution prevention, and watershed health, and they put that knowledge into action to help protect a local brook that has experienced significant trash accumulation over the years. It was a successful day and one scout even found an old golf club! We look forward to continuing stream clean-ups in priority areas throughout our watershed.

Indian Brook has seen additional activity from the WNRCD through the state's Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP). Dan and Lucas secured funding from the Basin 5 Clean Water Service Provider (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) to conduct site visits, contact landowners, and complete project verification assessments for two 2016 riparian buffer plantings: one at Indian Brook and another on McCabes Brook in Shelburne, adjacent to Shelburne Vineyards. The goal was to determine whether these plantings are eligible for operations and maintenance project adoption under current CWSP funding policies.

The Winooski NRCDC plans to adopt both of the visited sites in June 2026 as CWSP operations and maintenance adoption projects and will maintain them as functioning clean-water practices. Activities may include additional tree planting, invasive species management, and periodic site visits to complete project verification for DEC's records. The goal of adoption is to maintain these sites as healthy, effective buffers and to ensure the plantings continue to do their job in efficiently reducing phosphorus loads.

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains participate in the Indian Brook Stream Clean-Up. (Credit: PLUCK Design)



Riparian Buffer Projects for 2026

Lucas, our conservation specialist, is also planning a wide range of tree-planting projects for the spring and fall of 2026. We'll kick off the season at the Ethan Allen Homestead, where we'll plant 1.65 acres along the mainstem of the Winooski River. This is a wonderful opportunity to establish trees in partnership with some fantastic land stewards. Although the land is owned by the Winooski Valley Parks District, it has been leased to the New Farms for New Americans (NFNA) program. NFNA has decided to relocate their operations and reached out to see if we could help establish a new planting. Both NFNA and WVPD expressed strong interest in a riparian buffer project, and we are excited to make it happen. The soil is practically ready, as the land will be coming directly out of cultivation before the planting season. We're psyched to have NFNA members join us for the planting and to watch this area grow into a mature forest stand. The buffer will be 100 feet wide, and we plan to plant 675 stems.

Our attention then turns to another Trees for Streams project on the Browns River in Jericho. The Jericho-Underhill Land Trust (JULT) approached the Vermont Land Trust about a potential planting at Mills Riverside Park, and WNRCD was looped in to coordinate. This is a small but meaningful project at about 0.37 acres. The site has experienced repeated bank incision and sedimentation issues, and we hope that establishing a robust riparian buffer will help strengthen the resilience of the Browns River watershed. This project also aligns with Vermont River Conservancy's current priorities, as they have been focusing on the Browns River due to documented impairments. WNRCD plans to partner with JULT, the Jericho Underhill Parks District, the Vermont Land Trust, and Browns River Middle School to implement the planting this spring.

A fun fact: we are purchasing stems for this project from The Farm Upstream, a collective of five farmers who purchased and conserved the historic Hunt Farm in Jericho, VT. In addition to growing a wide variety of organic vegetables for their farm stand, they also operate a native plant nursery. We're excited to support a local enterprise, especially one located just up the road from Mills Riverside Park. The stems will be well adapted to the area's soils, having been grown nearby. We plan to plant 158 stems for this project. You might remember reading about them in a previous newsletter, as the WNRCD implemented a planting on their land just under eight months ago! (Cont. Pg 6)

Riparian Buffer Projects for 2026



*Streambank erosion at Mills Riverside Park prior to planting, facing east.
(Credit: Winooski NRC D)*

Our third project involves planting four acres on a property in Shelburne, VT, located along the Muddy Brook. This project was recently approved by the Basin 8 Basin Water Quality Council and is projected to achieve a phosphorus reduction of 3.9 kg per year. We plan to conduct targeted herbicide treatments to manage invasive species such as reed canary grass, honeysuckle, and spotted knapweed. Herbicide application will likely take place in spring 2026, followed by planting in fall 2026. We anticipate contracting with a partner organization to carry out the work. The goal is to plant 1,200 stems. The site is heavily infested with invasive vegetation and is also active with beavers. The BWQC supports incorporating experimental approaches such as fencing, beaver deterrent methods, and post-planting maintenance strategies. We have also partnered with Audubon Vermont to finalize the planting plan, as the area provides important habitat for Golden-winged Warblers, Brown-winged Warblers, and Bobolinks. It will surely be an exciting year for tree plantings and we plan to potentially squeeze one more planting application in for next year.

Want to volunteer at a tree planting? Contact Lucas Goldfluss at lucas@winooskinrcd.org

Vermont Envirothon

Sign-ups are still open, and it's not too late to register for the VT Envirothon. If you are a high school student interested in the natural sciences, or a teacher looking to put together a team, please get in touch as we'd be happy to help you get started. This is a fantastic opportunity for students not only to work as a team in a fun competition, but also to engage directly with Vermont natural-resources professionals, learn about their work, and ask as many questions as they like!

To sum it up, The Vermont Envirothon is a state-wide competition where high school students put their knowledge of natural resources to the test. Envirothon provides an opportunity for students to participate in hands-on STEM learning and connect with professionals in the fields of soil & water conservation, wildlife, forestry and agriculture. Some science teachers have chosen to incorporate studying for the Envirothon into their curriculum, while other coaches use the event as an opportunity to strengthen the public speaking skills of their students. Teams are composed of five students in grades 9-12 coordinated by one coach, typically a teacher or parent. A virtual training series will be offered in March and the competition will take place May 27th 2025 at Buck Lake in Woodbury, VT.

Each team will receive a packet of digital and print resources to help them prepare and each participant will receive a complimentary t-shirt! Please visit <https://www.vacd.org/programs/envirothon/> to learn more about the program. If you would like to register a team for Vermont Envirothon please fill out this online registration form: [Team Sign-up form](#)

For questions, please contact the Vermont Envirothon Coordinator Lucas Goldfluss at lucas@winooskinrcd.org



Photo from 2023 Vermont Envirothon competition day at Shelburne Farms, Credit: Winooski NRCD

WNRCD Announcements

As many of you already know, the Winooski NRC D is a unit of local government and is therefore overseen by elected officials. Each year, one seat of our five-member board of supervisors comes up for re-election. Our election process ran through November and December of this year and has just finished up. I am

happy to report that Nancy Everhart of Marshfield has been re-elected for another five-year term. Congratulations Nancy and thank you for another five years of service! The Winooski NRC D is always looking for new board members.

If you are interested, please contact the District Manager, Dan Koenemann (daniel@winooskinrcd.org), for more information.

*Nancy Everhart,
Winooski NRC D
Board Member,
Credit: Nancy
Everhart*



WNRCD Annual Tree Sale

We have posted our official 2026 tree sale brochure as well as listed the species that will be available with prices included. This year's theme, Rooted in Vermont, represents our commitment to supporting local nurseries that grow locally adapted plants. We are proud to source from experienced Vermont growers including East Hill Tree Farm (Plainfield), Elmore Roots Nursery (Elmore), Intervale Conservation Nursery (Burlington), Verterra Nursery (Hinesburg), and Vermont Wetland Plant Supply (Orwell). Thanks to these partners, we are able to offer a diverse selection of hardwoods, softwoods, fruit trees, shrubs, and even ferns.

We are so grateful for your continued support of the district Tree Sale year after year, and we can't wait to send them off to you. Please visit our website (winooskinrcd.org/annual-tree-sale-and-donations) to check it out and start planning your order!

Important dates:

Sale Opens: Monday, March 2, 2026

Sale Closes: Thursday, April 30, 2026 at 11:59 PM

Pick-Up Day: Saturday, May 9, 2026 (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)